

LITERARY PROSE IN TRANSLATION: PROBLEMS AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract : This article deals with the problems in translating literary prose and reveals some pertinent solutions and also concentrates on the need to expand the perimeters of Translation Studies. Unfortunately, the translators lay more emphasis on the translation of poetry; there should be more research regarding the particular problems of translating literary prose. One explanation of this could be the fact that the status of poetry is considered higher, but it is more possibly due to the notable flawed notion that the novels, essays, fiction etc. possess a simple structure compared to that of a poem and is thus easier to translate. However, many debates have been organised over when to translate, when to apply the close local equivalent, when to invent a new word by translating clearly, and when to copy. The plea made in this article is to admit the fact that there is a lot to be learnt from shaping the criteria for undertaking a prose-translation and we should appreciate the hard work, difficulties, or frustration of the ‘translators’ (go-betweens) in the creation of good sense of the text.

Keywords: translation, prose, problems, solutions, distant-author, prosaic-ideas, go-between.

Introduction: Evidently, ‘prose-translation’ is the translation of novels, essays, fiction, short stories, comedy, folk tale, hagiography, works of criticism, science fiction etc. It is a type of literary creativeness where the written-work of one language is re-created in another. It is an inherent idea that the translation of poetry is very

problematic, yet we have to agree that the translators also have to face lots of difficulties when it comes to translating prose.

However, when the source and target languages belong to different cultural groups, the first problem faced by the prose-translator is finding terms in his or her own language that express the highest level of faithfulness possible to the meaning of certain words. For example, there are some words that are related to typical fabrics, cookery specialties, or jobs; they also represent specific culture and the translators should be very careful in translating such words. They also find it difficult to render ambiguous puns. Similarly, the titles of stories and novels provide many examples of such ambiguities, which are hard or even impossible to translate.

Many people think that the translation of literary works is one of the highest forms of rendition because it is more than simply the translation of text. A literary translator must also be skilled enough to translate feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other delicate elements of a piece of work. In fact, the translators do not translate meanings but the messages. That is why, the text must be considered in its totality.

Problems in Translating Literary Prose Translation is a challenging activity and there are few difficulties that emerge throughout the translation process since every language portrays the world in diverse way and has its own grammar structure, grammar rules and syntax variance. For example, Russian has separate words for 'light blue' and 'dark blue', while other languages, such as Uzbek and Japanese, have words that can denote 'blue' or 'green', or something in between.

The most particular problems that the translators face include- illegible text, missing references, several constructions of grammar, dialect terms and neologisms, irrationally vague terminology, inexplicable acronyms and abbreviations, untranslatability, intentional misnaming, particular cultural references etc. Nonetheless, there are some theorists who think that 'literal translation' is not possible. They present three main reasons supporting their stance:

1. Because a particular word in one language often contains meanings that involve several words in another language. For example, the English word 'wall' might be rendered into German as Wand (inside wall) or as Mauer (exterior wall),

2. Because grammatical particles (verb tenses, singular/dual/plural, case markers etc.) are not available in every language, and

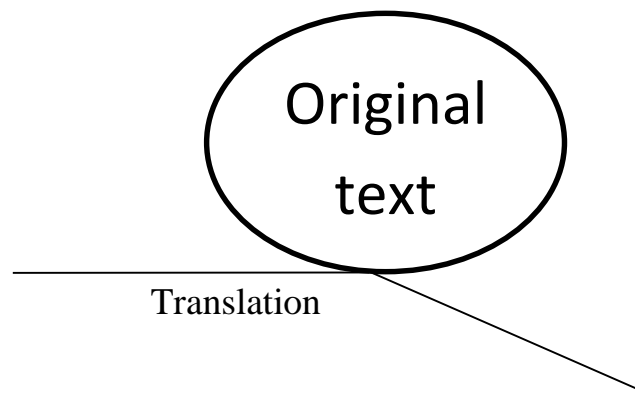
3. Because idioms of one language and culture may be utterly perplexing to speakers from another language and culture.

There are some major problems a translator should overcome while working on literary prose translation. First, it is the total lack of literalness in translation. This kind of translation is not intended to do literally, word by word. That is why literary translation is a subject of disagreement among scholars and translators.

Secondly, it is translation of aphorisms and idioms. This issue is not as complicated as it might seem at first glance, but it requires large vocabulary and availability of a specialized dictionary. Third, it is play on words and humor. One of the most interesting moments in literary translation is when the translated text has humorous or ironic implications. It is necessary to have special skills in order to manage to keep that play on words that the author means.

And fourthly, it is compliance of styles, cultures and epochs. Translator of literary texts should be in some way the researcher. It is difficult to translate the text of a different era, a different culture, if you are not familiar with its features. And again, we come to the fact that the translator must be talented.

Walter Benjamin (1996) presents the idea that a translation does not indicate an original text, it has no relationship with communication, its purpose is not to carry meaning, etc. The work of writing does not merely imitate or copy, but rather strives to extract and convey the essence of the previous text. But, it is not the message that is passed along in the good translation, Benjamin will say, for “what does a literary work ‘say’? [...] it ‘tells’ very little”. He shows the relationship between the supposed original and translation by using the symbol of a tangent: translation is like a straight line or curve, which touches the circle (i.e. the original) in one single point and follows its own way later:



The Relationship between the Original Text and the Translated Version

Solutions for the Translators of Literary Prose

Initially, the translation of literary works - novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc. - is considered a literary recreation in its own right. However, as far as the solutions are concerned, the prose-translators should start with the careful adherence to the following principles:

1. a great understanding of the language, written and verbal, from which he is translating i.e. the source language;
2. an excellent control of the language into which he is translating i.e. the target language;
3. awareness of the subject matter of the book being translated;
4. a deep knowledge of the etymological and idiomatic correlates between the two languages; and
5. a delicate common sense of when to paraphrase or 'translate literally' and when to paraphrase, in order to guarantee exact rather than fake equivalents between the source- and target-language texts.

Additionally, the prose-translators should follow the six principles presented by Hillaire Belloc (1931):

1. The translator must regard the work as an integral unit and translate in sections.
2. The translator must decode 'idiom by idiom'.
3. The translator ought to translate 'intention by intention' hinting the heaviness a particular term might contain in a meticulous situation in the S.L that would be asymmetrical if translated exactly into the T.L.

4. Belloc warns against les faux amis, those words or formations that may possibly come out to match up in both S.L and T.L but actually do not. For example, ‘demander- to ask’, translated incorrectly as to ‘demand’.

5. The translator is supposed to ‘alter courageously’.

6. The translator must never overstate.

Conclusion In the end, since translation is simultaneously a theory and a practice, the translators, beside dealing with the difficulties inherent to the translation of prose, must think about the artistic features of the text, its exquisiteness and approach, as well as its marks (lexical, grammatical, or phonological). They should not forget that the stylistic marks of one language can be immensely different from another. “As far as the whole text is concerned, it is simply impossible to transfer all the message of the original text into the target text” (Yinhua, 2011: 169).

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